

# ABS Privacy Policy

## ABOUT THIS PRIVACY POLICY

This privacy policy sets out the personal information handling practices of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). As an Australian Government agency, we comply with our obligations under the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Privacy Act) and handle your personal information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). The APPs regulate how we may collect, use, disclose and store your personal information, and how you may access and correct the personal information that we hold about you.

## OUR PERSONAL INFORMATION HANDLING PRACTICES

We handle your personal information when performing our functions under the [Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975](#) (ABS Act) and the [Census and Statistics Act 1905](#) (Census and Statistics Act). For further information about the legislated functions of the ABS, please see [ABS Legislative Framework](#).

Your personal information collected by the ABS under the authority of the Census and Statistics Act is protected by additional secrecy provisions. The Census and Statistics Act secrecy provisions contain standards, rules and obligations for the collection, use and disclosure of information (which may include personal information) which operate alongside the requirements of the Privacy Act. The Census and Statistics Act prohibits the disclosure of your personal information, except in the case when it is returned to the person from whom the ABS collected the information or, in certain circumstances, where the data needs to be queried with a contact person from the business that the data is about. As a result, your personal information remains confidential to the ABS.

## COLLECTION

We may collect personal information about you relating to:

- the Census of Population and Housing and surveys conducted under the Census and Statistics Act; or
- surveys conducted under the ABS Act; or
- administrative data collections; or
- other data collection activities (including statistical research); or
- your involvement in activities that support statistical coordination and dissemination; or
- you contacting the ABS; or
- your employment by or contract to the ABS.

## Kinds of personal information that we collect and hold

In performing our functions, we may collect and hold the following kinds of personal information about you:

- name, address and contact details (e.g. phone number, email address);
- basic demographics (e.g. age, sex, marital status, relationship with other household members);
- personal characteristics and personal opinions (e.g. date of birth, country of birth, languages spoken, housing tenure, education qualification, employment information, income and financial information);
- business characteristics which relate to sole traders and partnerships (e.g. business name, business address, business contact details);
- personal identifiers (e.g. government related identifiers or payroll identifiers);
- employee records; and/or
- photographs, video recordings and audio recordings of you (as part of testing, and with your consent).

In performing our functions, we may also on occasion collect and hold the following kinds of information considered sensitive under the APPs:

- your racial or ethnic origin;
- your religious beliefs or affiliations;
- your membership of a trade union;

- your criminal record; and/or
- your health information (e.g. physical health, mental health, disability).

## **How we collect and hold personal information**

We may collect personal information about you directly from you as well as indirectly from third parties.

In performing our functions, we may collect your personal information using a variety of methods including:

- paper-based and electronic forms;
- in person and over the phone;
- administrative data sources;
- recording and surveillance devices (for staff and office security);
- paper and electronic correspondence;
- [ABS](#), Australian Statistics Advisory Council ([ASAC](#)) and National Statistical Service ([NSS](#)) websites; and
- ABS' social media accounts.

We collect and store your personal information securely. Electronic and paper records containing your personal information are protected in accordance with the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework. We manage your personal information in accordance with the Australian Government records management regime. When no longer required, your personal information is destroyed or deleted according to the [Administrative Functions Disposal Authority](#) and our records authorities ([2001/00000540](#) and [2007/00105946](#)).

## **USE OR DISCLOSURE**

We only use or disclose your personal information for the purposes for which it was given to us, i.e. purposes which are related to our functions as described under the ABS Act and the Census and Statistics Act.

We do not usually disclose your personal information and are unlikely to disclose your personal information to overseas recipients. The ABS will never release any information of a personal or domestic nature that has been collected under the Census and Statistics Act. Instances where the ABS may disclose your personal information include where:

- you have consented;
- you would reasonably expect, or have been told, that we usually disclose information of this kind;
- or
- the disclosure is otherwise required or authorised by law.

## **Purposes for which we collect, hold, use and disclose personal information**

We collect, hold, use and disclose personal information for statistical and non-statistical purposes.

For statistical purposes, your personal information may be handled in relation to statistical collection activities or statistical coordination and dissemination activities.

Statistical collections include:

- the Census of Population and Housing and surveys conducted under the Census and Statistics Act;
- surveys conducted under the ABS Act;
- administrative data collections; and
- other data collection activities (including statistical research).

Statistical coordination and dissemination activities include contact with stakeholders, event participants, consultancy clients and those individuals who collaborate with us on statistical development activities.

For non-statistical purposes, your personal information may be handled in relation to you contacting the ABS (public contact) and your employment by or contract to the ABS (ABS staff).

## ***Statistical collections***

As part of its statistical collections, the ABS collects data from individuals, households and businesses, as well as from administrative sources. These collections support activities related to the compilation, production and analysis of statistics on a wide range of social, population, environmental and economic matters.

The ABS collects, compiles, analyses and disseminates nationally representative statistics on a wide range of social, environmental and economic matters. The personal information collected as part of these activities varies with the collection topic and the collection unit. Most individual and household collections include basic demographics; some collect personal characteristics and personal opinions. Most business collections include point of contact details; some include details that relate to employees, sole traders and partnerships. Various administrative collections usually include basic demographics and may include personal characteristics relating to individuals and their family.

All survey, Census and research data, including data from administrative sources, is collected by the ABS under the authority of the Census and Statistics Act, unless explicit approval for the collection is provided by the Australian Statistician. In a small number of collections, data is collected under the authority of the ABS Act. This is usually done on a contractual basis to allow the clients to access unit record survey data for the purpose of producing statistics. Any collection of data under the ABS Act is on an overtly voluntary basis.

Personal information collected under the Census and Statistics Act remains confidential and is used for statistical purposes only. For further information about the privacy of survey data, please see [Survey Participant Information](#).

## ***Statistical coordination and dissemination***

We collect personal information including name, address and contact details about our stakeholders, event participants, consultancy clients and collaborators in statistical development activities. We collect this information through direct contact with these individuals.

We use this personal information to manage:

- stakeholder contact for collaboration on national statistical activities
- participant contact for education and training activities
- client contact for statistical consultancy work
- volunteer contact for survey testing to assist in the development of surveys
- volunteer contact for testing infrastructure in the development and evaluation of the ABS website
- authentication to access online resources (e.g. group membership lists)
- notification about ABS products and services (e.g. distribution lists).

## ***Public contact***

We collect personal information including name, address and contact details as part of our usual communication and correspondence processes, including when you write to or email us, when you call us, or when you hand us your business card.

We use personal information associated with public contact to respond to complaints, Freedom of Information requests and other inquiries.

## ***ABS staff***

We collect and hold personal information about our staff; regarding personnel and payroll, recruitment and other matters (such as those relating to work health and safety).

We collect this personal information through our corporate systems and only use or disclose it to facilitate the effective business operations of the ABS.

**OUR WEBSITES - ABS ([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)), ASAC ([www.asac.gov.au](http://www.asac.gov.au)) and NSS ([www.nss.gov.au](http://www.nss.gov.au))**

We will keep the information you submit via our websites secure.

## **INFORMATION COLLECTED**

We monitor the use of our websites in order to improve them and the services we provide to you.

We use first party cookies to collect the following information:

- your IP address
- the date and time of your visit
- the pages you accessed and the documents you downloaded
- the search terms you used
- the previous site you visited
- your top level domain name (such as .com, .gov, .au)
- your network location name (such as your internet service provider or organisation's name)
- any cookies that your browser has presented to our server
- your browser, operating system and other information about your computer (such as your screen resolution, colour depth and various plugins that you used in visiting our site).

More information about first party cookies can be found below.

This information is used by the ABS only for the purpose of improving our online offerings. We do not collect identifiable personal information about you if you only browse our websites.

### **Email addresses**

We will only use your email address for the purpose for which you provided it. It will not be added to a mailing list without your permission, and will be removed at your request. We will not disclose your email address without your consent.

### **Cookies**

A first party (or persistent) cookie is a very small text file placed on your hard drive by our web server. It is essentially your identification card, and cannot be executed as code or deliver viruses. It is uniquely yours and can only be read by the server that gave it to you.

Using cookies allows the ABS to be more efficient. We can learn what information is important to our visitors, and what isn't. We can discard Web pages you don't use, and focus our efforts on information you need.

Some ABS online products and services also require your web browser to accept persistent cookies. If you do not or cannot store cookies, it may be possible to acquire versions of these products and services on CD ROM or other media not connected to the Internet. Please contact us for further information.

In order to help you further protect your privacy, we have also implemented the files required to support the Platform for Privacy Preferences Project (P3P) recommendations. P3P enables the ABS to express our privacy practices in a standard format that can be retrieved automatically and interpreted easily by P3P compatible browsers. For more information on P3P, please read the [Frequently Asked Questions about P3P](#).

### **Google Analytics**

In addition to web server logs, our websites use Google Analytics, a web analytics service provided by Google Inc. ("Google"). Reports obtained from Google Analytics are used to help improve the efficiency and usability of our websites.

Google Analytics uses cookies to gather statistics about how the website is accessed. The information generated by the cookie about your use of the website (including your IP address) will be transmitted to and stored by Google on servers located outside Australia.

Google will use this information for the purpose of evaluating your use of our websites, compiling reports on website activity for website operators and providing other services relating to website activity and internet usage. Google may transfer this information to third parties where required to do so by law, or where such third parties process the information on Google's behalf.

By using these websites, you consent to the processing of data about you by Google in the manner described in [Google's Privacy Policy](#) and for the purposes set out above. You can opt out of Google Analytics if you disable or refuse the cookie, disable JavaScript, or use the [opt-out service](#) provided by Google.

## **Other sites**

These sites contain links to external websites, which are not covered by this privacy policy. We recommend that you review the privacy policy statement of each site you visit.

## **Accreditation**

These sites are accredited and maintained to Australian Government Internet security standards to ensure the confidentiality and/or integrity of information posted on the site. These standards meet or exceed Australian information security management standards (AS/NZS 4444).

## **ALTERNATIVES TO OUR WEBSITES**

If you prefer not to submit information via these websites, please contact us for advice on how to proceed. Survey respondents should phone one of the following numbers, depending on the state or territory in which you reside:

New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory: 1800 813 025

Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania: 1800 060 911

Queensland: 1800 636 809

Western Australia: 1800 643 777

Northern Territory: 1800 111 994.

All other enquiries should be forwarded to the National Information Referral Service on 1300 135 070.

## **HOW TO ACCESS PERSONAL INFORMATION WE HOLD ABOUT YOU AND SEEK ITS CORRECTION**

You have the right to request access to the personal information that the ABS holds about you and to request its correction. If you are seeking access to personal information in relation to a survey, please contact the 1800 phone number you have been provided with (listed above in 'Alternatives to the ABS website').

If your request to access personal information does not relate to a survey, you may request access to or correction of the personal information that we hold about you by contacting us using the details provided below.

## **HOW TO LODGE A COMPLAINT ABOUT PRIVACY MATTERS**

We are committed to protecting your privacy. We treat any accidental or unauthorised disclosure of your personal information seriously and deal with it promptly.

If you think we may have breached your privacy rights or our privacy responsibilities, you may contact us using the details provided below.

We will acknowledge the receipt of your complaint within five business days of receiving it. In most cases, we will complete our investigation into your complaint and respond to you within 30 days. If the matter is more complex and our investigation may take longer, we will let you know when we expect to be able to provide our response.

A complaint should first be made to us and we should be given 30 days to respond. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of or our response to your complaint, you may refer your complaint to the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#).

## **HOW TO CONTACT US**

Please contact us if you have any queries about the personal information that the ABS holds about you or the way that we handle that personal information.

Our Privacy Officer will deal with your inquiries or complaints about our compliance with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs).

The Privacy Officer can be contacted:

By email: [privacy@abs.gov.au](mailto:privacy@abs.gov.au)

By phone: 02 6252 7203

By post: Privacy Officer  
Policy and Legislation Section  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
Locked Bag 10  
Belconnen ACT 2617

The Privacy Officer will respond to your inquiry or complaint promptly, if you provide your contact details.

The [ABS Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the ABS will handle any personal information that you provide to us.

## **AVAILABILITY OF THIS POLICY**

If you wish to access this policy in an alternative format (e.g. hard copy), please contact us using the details provided above.

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